

The Mass Part 1: Sacred Liturgy and Prayers  
Sunday, September 15, 2024

**Introductory Rites**

- Entrance
- Greeting
- Penitential Act
- Glory to God
- Collect

**Liturgy of the Word**

- First Reading
- Responsorial Psalm
- Second Reading (on Sundays and solemnities)
- Gospel Acclamation
- Gospel
- Homily
- Profession of Faith (on Sundays, solemnities, and special occasions)
- Universal Prayer

**Liturgy of the Eucharist**

- Presentation of the Gifts and Preparation of the Altar
- Prayer over the Offerings
- Eucharistic Prayer
- Preface
- Holy, Holy, Holy
- First half of prayer, including Consecration
- Mystery of Faith
- Second half of prayer, ending with Doxology

**The Communion Rite**

- The Lord's Prayer
- Sign of Peace
- Lamb of God
- Communion
- Prayer after Communion

**Concluding Rites**

- Optional announcements
- Greeting and Blessing
- Dismissal

## **There are three “Principal” parts of the Mass:**

- An Offertory – We offer ourselves up to God with the person of Christ
- A Consecration – We consecrate ourselves to God through the person of Christ
- Communion – We commune with God in the person of Christ.

## **What’s the purpose of Mass?**

- Adoration – We honor God through Christ Jesus
- Thanksgiving – In union with Christ our thanksgiving to God
- Atonement – for forgiveness of our daily sins / Mass makes mercy possible with sufficient sorrow for our sins

God “condescends” to us and we “ascend” to him – He lowers Himself to us and we lift ourselves to Him

## **How do we (or how should we) prepare for Mass?**

- **Learning/Studying Catholic Doctrine/Beliefs**
  - Books, Podcasts, Study Groups, OCIA, Internet resources, Apps etc...
- **Understanding the Mass**
  - All its parts and meaning
- **Ascetic Preparation**
  - Focused mind and heart – open to hear God’s voice
  - Prayers, petitions, offerings... what are you bringing with you to talk to God about?
- **Pre-read the “Readings”**
  - Your mind will be more receptive to hearing it again (especially if we have a choir of kids that day)
  - The Homily will make more sense

## **Things you may see...**

- *Holy water fonts* - One of the first things, Catholics do when they enter the Church, is to dip their right hand/fingers in the Holy water and make the sign of the Cross. This ritual is a reminder of your Baptism; we were baptized with water and signed with the cross.
- *Genuflecting* - It has been a custom in the medieval time to go down on one knee or genuflect before a king or a person of high rank. This secular practice of honor has gradually entered the Catholic Church, in order to honor the presence of Jesus Christ present in the Tabernacle. Today many people express their reverence by bowing as an accepted practice.
- *The Sign of the Cross* – The sign of the cross is closely tied to baptism. Jesus told the apostles, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Mt 28:19). The Catechism of the Catholic Church tells us that when Catholics are baptized “the sign of the cross, on the threshold of the celebration, marks with the imprint of Christ the one who is going to belong to him and signifies the grace of the Redemption Christ won for us by his cross” (CCC 1235). Each time we make the sign of the cross we remember that we belong to Christ.
- *Before Mass Prayers* – This is a time to quiet your mind and remind yourself that you are in the presence of God. Ask the Lord to send His Holy Spirit that He may grant you a spirit of peace and cleanse you of the spirit of this world, your worries, your problems, and your distractions.

- **Introductory Rites (standing)**

- Entrance
- When the Mass begins, everyone stands up and sings. Standing is a sign of readiness to begin and much more a sign of welcoming with respect to the priest(s), who is/are going to celebrate the Mass. Singing an entrance song helps us to unite our thoughts and voices for the celebration.

- **Greeting**

- The priest will ask us to begin with the Sign of the Cross and will greet us, saying, “The Lord be with you.” It is both a wish (may the Lord be with you) and a profound statement of faith (as you assemble for worship, the Lord is with you). It is an ancient biblical greeting: Boaz returned from Bethlehem (we read in the Book of Ruth 2:4) and said to the reapers, “The Lord be with you!” The ritual response to this greeting is always the formula, “And with your spirit,” by which we return the greeting and statement of faith. (2 Tim 4:22)

- **Penitential Act**

- “Be holy as your heavenly Father is holy” was the instruction of Jesus to his disciples. We, as God’s children, gathered in his House to offer the Sacrifice of Christ and to receive the heavenly gifts, need to be holy, worthy of presenting ourselves. Hence, we pray for inner purification. “I confess to Almighty God...” or “Kyrie Eleison” (Neh 9:2/Lev 5:5)

- **Glory to God/Gloria**

- On Sundays, solemnities, and feasts, the Gloria follows the Penitential Act. The Gloria begins by echoing the proclamation of the angels at the birth of Christ: “Glory to God in the highest!” In this ancient hymn, the gathered assembly joins the heavenly hosts in offering praise and adoration to the Father and Jesus through the Holy Spirit. (Luke 2:14)

- **Collect (“Let us pray...”)**

- The final part of the preparation is the prayer which the Priest makes for the people, a gathering prayer made that we may be made worthy of such great mysteries. The Collects are rich in the doctrine of the faith, teaching us about the mystery of our Lord. The prayer is always to be made not of our own merits but to depend on the merits of Christ.

- **Liturgy of the Word**

- We sit! / First Reading
  - The first reading is read from the Old Testament (except during the Easter Season, during which it is read from the “Acts of the Apostles” in the New Testament). This narrates the history of how God manifested His love, chose the people of Israel, and made a covenant with them; at the same time, how the people were not faithful in responding to God’s love. Generally, the first reading is related to the Gospel passage chosen for the day. After the lector finishes, they say “The Word of the Lord” to which we reply, “Thanks be to God.”
- Responsorial Psalm
  - Following the first reading, one of the Psalms, which is an inspired hymnal from the Book of Psalms in the Old Testament, is either sung or recited. The psalm is very closely connected to the theme of the first reading.
- Second Reading (on Sundays and solemnities)
  - The second reading is read usually from one of the letters of St. Paul. Sometimes it is read also from one of the letters of St. Peter or of St. John.

- **We stand! / Gospel Acclamation**

- This is typically an Alleluia with a verse of Scripture, which may be omitted if not sung. Alleluia is replaced during Lent by a different acclamation of praise. All stand while the Gospel is chanted or read by a deacon or, if none is available, by a priest.

- **Gospel**

- The third reading is taken from one of the four Gospels. Since we believe in the unique presence of Christ, who speaks to us directly in the Gospel, it has been a long custom in the Catholic Church to stand when we hear the Gospel. The Gospel is always read by the priest or the deacon, representing Christ. The reading is traditionally introduced with the phrase “a reading from the Holy Gospel according to” followed by the evangelist’s name. We then say, “Glory to you, O Lord,” and make the sign of the cross on our foreheads, lips, and heart. To conclude the Gospel reading, the priest or deacon proclaims: “The Gospel of the Lord,” and the faithful respond, “Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.” The priest or deacon then kisses the book. If a deacon participates, he reads the Gospel. If a priest is not present, the celebrating priest or a concelebrant, if there is one, proclaims it.

- **We sit! / Homily**

- It means more than just a sermon or a talk about how we are to live or what we are to believe. It is an act of worship rooted in the texts of the Mass and especially in the readings from Scripture which have just been proclaimed. The homily takes that word and brings it to our life situation today. Just as a large piece of bread is broken to feed individual persons, the word of God must be broken open so it can be received and digested by the congregation.

- **We stand! / Profession of Faith (on Sundays, solemnities, and special occasions)**

- The Creed we say at Mass is known as the Nicene Creed. This is longer than the creed we recite at the beginning of the Rosary, which is known as the Apostles’ Creed. The Apostles’ Creed is said to have been composed by the Apostles, whereas the Nicene Creed was composed in the 4th century at the Council of Nicaea. It encompasses all that we as Catholics should believe. By reciting it during the Mass, we proclaim our faith.

- **Universal Prayer**

- We pray for the Church, nations and their leaders, people in special need, and the local needs of our parish—the petitions usually fall into these four categories. A minister will announce the petitions, and we are usually given an opportunity to pray for the intentions in our heart, making some common response aloud like, “Lord, hear our prayer.”

## Liturgy of the Eucharist

- **We sit! / Presentation of the Gifts and Preparation of the Altar**

- The linen corporal is spread over the center of the altar, and the Liturgy of the Eucharist begins with the ceremonial placing on it of bread and wine. The unleavened, wheat bread (in the tradition of the Latin Church) is placed on a paten, and the wine (from grapes) is put in a chalice and mixed with a little water. As the priest places each on the corporal, he says a silent prayer over each individual, which, if the rite is unaccompanied by singing, he is permitted to say aloud, in which case the congregation responds to each prayer with: “Blessed be God forever.” Then the priest washes his hands, a rite in which the need for interior purification finds expression. “Wash me, O Lord, from my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.”

- **We stand! / Prayer over the Offerings**

- Pray, brethren, that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father” — “May the Lord receive the sacrifice from your hands, for the praise and glory of His name, for our good and good of all His Holy Church.”

- Eucharistic Prayer — the center and high point of the entire celebration!

- Preface — “The Lord be with you” — “Lift up your hearts”
  - The Preface begins the preparation for the Consecration, which is the second principal part of the Mass after the Offertory. At the Last Supper, Christ began His Passion by giving thanks to the Father, in saying the Preface, disposes the souls of the gathered by saying, “Our Lift up your hearts, and when the people answer, “We have lifted them up to the Lord,” let them remember that they are to think of nothing else but God.” (St. Cyprian)
- Holy, Holy, Holy (Sanctus)
  - The Preface called us to lift up our hearts, and the people now praise the Divinity of Christ alongside the Angels: “Holy, Holy, Holy”; they praise His humanity alongside that of the children of Palm Sunday, singing as Christ entered Jerusalem to suffer for our salvation: “Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord.”
- **We KNEEL!**
  - First half of prayer, including Consecration
  - The Son of God is about to renew His supreme miracle, by the sole authority of His Word spoken through the Priest. Our Lord, by the same authority that once drew all of Creation out of nothing, will transform the substance of the bread into His Own Body and the substance of the wine into His Own Blood, leaving only the appearances of bread and wine upon the altar. The bells will be rung three times. See Matt. 26:26-28, Mark 14:22-24, Luke 22:19-20, 1 Cor. 11:24-25
  - The Priest extends his hands over the offering, symbolizing that the Eucharist is a sacrifice, for Christ takes our sins upon Himself and offers Himself in our place and for our sake. This recalls the Old Testament practice of sprinkling a goat with blood (symbolizing wrongdoing) and letting it escape into the wilderness (symbolizing vicarious satisfaction). This animal was called the “scapegoat.”
- Mystery of Faith (Memorial Acclamation)\*\* — “when we eat...” “Save us, Savior of the world...” “We proclaim your death...”
- Second half of prayer, ending with Doxology
  - The Antiphon ends with an emphatic doxology for which the priest elevates the paten with the Host and the deacon (if there is one) elevates the chalice, and the priest’s proclamation of Christ “Through him, with him, in him, in the unity of the Holy spirit, all glory and honor is yours, Almighty Father, for ever and ever,” to which the faithful sing

or chant **The Great Amen**. This Amen is the faithful's assent to all that God has wrought through the consecration and re-presentation of the sacrifice of Christ.

## **The Communion Rite**

- **We Stand! / The Lord's Prayer**
  - St. Gregory the Great placed this prayer after the Canon as its completion. In the ancient Church it was considered the only preparation worthy of Holy Communion.
  - Our Father is in heaven, and our daily lives should be brought into harmony with God's eternity. As Christ first pronounced "Thy will be done" in teaching us this prayer, He knew He would one day say the same prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. The daily bread we ask for is especially the divine Eucharist and all of the graces that flow from it into our day.
  - We ask not simply to be preserved from evil but to be delivered from it, by the profound purification that The Host will bring.
  - Sign of Peace
    - The kiss of peace prepares us for the actual or at least the spiritual reception of the Sacrament of charity and concord. It "reconciles and unites souls to one another, procuring an entire oblivion of all offenses. It is a sign that minds are again reconciled with one another, and that all remembrance of injustice suffered in the past is banished from the heart" (St. Cyril of Jerusalem).
- **Lamb of God (Agnus Dei)**
  - In the Old Law, a lamb was one of the usual animals of sacrifice. Jesus Christ is the one true Lamb, who atoned for and effaced the sins of the world in His Blood. His designation as a Lamb refers also to the patience and voluntary resignation with which He subjected Himself to suffering and death. The invocation also proclaims Christ's divinity. He is the sacrificial Lamb, that takes away the sins of the world only because he is the beloved Son in Whom God is well pleased.
  - We say "Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world..." three times, and the end of the last one, we finish with "...grant us peace."
- **We Kneel!**
  - The priest then presents the Eucharistic Bread to the congregation, saying: "Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those who are called to the supper of the Lamb." Then all repeat: "Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed," which is a reference in the Gospel of Matthew to where a Roman centurion manifests exemplary faith in Jesus to heal his servant, saying that Jesus' word alone was sufficient. See Matt 8:8.
- **Communion**
  - As God fed our ancestors in the desert on their pilgrimage, so God gives us food for our journey. We approach the minister who gives us the Eucharistic bread with the words "The Body of Christ," and we respond, "Amen." The Eucharist may be received either on the tongue or in the hand. During this procession we usually sing a hymn which unites our voices, minds and thoughts, even as the Body and Blood of Christ unites our bodies. Then we pray silently in our hearts, thanking and praising God and asking for all that this sacrament promises.
- **Prayer after Communion**
  - The priest unites our prayers in the Prayer After Communion, to which we respond, "Amen."

## **Concluding Rites**

- Optional announcements
- Greeting and Blessing

- We bow our heads to receive a blessing. As the priest names the Trinity—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—we make the Sign of the Cross.
- Dismissal
  - The priest or deacon then dismisses the assembly: “Go in peace.” And we give our liturgical “yes” by saying, “Thanks be to God.”